

UNITED STATES-COLOMBIA TRADE  
PROMOTION AGREEMENT IMPLE-  
MENTATION ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 11, 2011*

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

After having waited for four years since this agreement was first signed, the time has finally come for Congress to vote to approve it.

This agreement is good for Colombia but is even better for the United States.

According to the International Trade Commission, the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement will expand exports of U.S. goods by more than \$1 billion dollars every year, which will allow businesses to create thousands of new jobs for those Americans who are struggling to find one.

In South Florida, Colombia is already our second largest trading partner.

Our two largest economic engines are the Port of Miami and Miami International Airport, both of which will benefit tremendously from the increase in trade with Colombia.

In 2010, Colombia was the 10th largest trading partner with the Port of Miami, with bilateral trade worth \$6.8 billion.

And 96 percent of the flowers that are sent to the U.S. from Colombia come through Miami International Airport, which helps support tens of thousands of jobs related to the airport and several aviation industries.

These figures will grow rapidly once this agreement has been approved.

But there is more at stake here than increased trade.

Colombia has been a strong democracy and a steadfast ally in a region where U.S. interests are under assault.

We have jointly battled narco-terrorists, leftist guerrillas, and the aggressive actions of Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez.

This agreement will strengthen that vital partnership between our two nations and demonstrate to our friends and enemies alike that the U.S. intends to remain a strong presence in the region.

Madam Speaker, it is time to put American interests first instead of the partisan political considerations that have delayed this agreement for four years.

I strongly encourage my colleagues to vote yes on the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement and allow our businesses to finally begin creating the jobs that so many Americans are searching for.

UNITED STATES-KOREA FREE  
TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMEN-  
TATION ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 11, 2011*

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, ratification of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement—or KORUS—is economically im-

portant, for the nation and for my home state of Virginia. According to the U.S. International Trade Commission, U.S. exports to South Korea would increase by more than \$10 billion. Increased U.S. exports mean more U.S. manufacturing jobs.

Korea is the 14th largest export market for Virginia goods, and the trade agreement would strengthen that relationship. Upon implementation of KORUS, Virginia exporters would have a \$4 million cost advantage over similar global competitors without a Korean agreement. Eight out of Virginia's ten top exports would enter Korea duty free immediately.

The U.S. tech industry, which has a significant presence in Northern Virginia, also stands to gain from KORUS. According to industry groups, exports from the U.S. to South Korea could increase by up to 49 percent. Korean businesses have a strong presence in Virginia and we must ensure that businesses in Virginia and throughout the nation have equal access. I urge my colleagues to support the Korean Free Trade Agreement.

PANAMA AND COLOMBIA FREE  
TRADE AGREEMENT

**HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 12, 2011*

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, to provide qualified support of the U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and to express my opposition to the U.S.-Colombia and U.S.-South Korea Trade Agreements.

The original Panama and Colombia FTAs, negotiated by the Bush Administration, were fatally flawed. The Democratic congressional leadership negotiated substantial improvements to the accords, among them ensuring that generic medicines could be made available in these countries at the same time as the United States. There is no reason that intellectual property rules in free trade agreements should force our trading partners in the developing world to wait longer than the United States to have access to affordable medicines, and I strongly believe that we need to make more progress on this issue in future agreements. I am deeply concerned that the proposal USTR has made for the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) may result in generic medicines becoming available in TPP developing countries later than in the United States. Denying poor countries access to generic competition can mean the difference between life and death. I am prepared to support the Panama FTA, consistent with my previous support of the Peru FTA, because the issue of access to medicines is positively addressed; and I will continue to argue that, at the minimum, the precedent in the Peru and Panama treaties be followed.

Unfortunately, I regret I am unable to support the Colombia Free Trade Agreement. Colombia is a great friend of the United States. We are strong economic partners and have strong cultural ties. And Colombia has been an important ally at the UN Security Council, opposing the unilateral bid for statehood for Palestine. But this trade agreement contains a fatal flaw at the heart of what trade must be about: raising the quality of life for the people living and working here in the United States

and in the countries we trade with. Jobs, job security, and labor rights are fundamental to a successful trade relationship. Regrettably, Colombia has had a long and painful struggle with labor abuses and violence and retribution against labor rights activists. Although Colombia has taken significant steps to reform labor and workplace protections by carrying out the Action Plan on Workers Rights that was negotiated with the help of the Obama Administration, the plan is not yet fully implemented and significant benchmarks for labor reform are still outstanding. Moreover, the Republican leadership has refused to allow the Action Plan to be referenced in the FTA implementing legislation we are voting on today. If the Action Plan had been incorporated directly into this legislation, I would have been inclined to vote for the Colombia FTA today. But this inherent deficiency prevents me from supporting this measure for a country I respect and value as a strategic ally.

Finally, I regret that I am unable to support the U.S.-South Korea Trade Agreement. I am pleased that the agreement makes transformative progress in copyright protection by strengthening enforcement against counterfeits and extending intellectual property protection to the digital and online domain. But the agreement includes a harmful provision exempting American vehicles from South Korea's progressive greenhouse gas and fuel economy standards. I have consistently believed in the principle that trade agreements negotiated by the United States should not compromise environmental standards in the US or abroad, and I believe the provisions in this FTA, by weakening South Korea's overall environmental benchmarks, sets a dangerous precedent for future FTAs. The global market for automobiles increasingly demands more fuel efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles. We should strengthen the competitiveness of our auto industry by raising our own standards, not by weakening those of others.

I am disappointed that further progress on these core issues could not be made as the Colombia and Korea trade agreements were finalized. I remain committed to strong economic ties between the United States and these vital markets in Latin America and Asia.

VETERANS OPPORTUNITY TO  
WORK ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

**HON. CORRINE BROWN**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 11, 2011*

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2433, the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011.

I commend Chairman MILLER for introducing legislation to allow veterans to receive retraining assistance. However, with unemployment of veterans at an all time high, and those coming back from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan not having jobs, I don't understand the reasoning of limiting the age of eligibility to those between 35 and 60.

I also don't understand the funding mechanism for the program. In this time of budget tightening, and a refusal to discuss tax increases for any issue, this bill taxes veterans with higher interest rates to pay for more government programs. This legislation doubles

the interest rates veterans for housing loans. The new lower rates went into effect on October 1, and I am sure in these tough economic times our veterans can use the estimated \$1.6 billion dollars this change in law will cost them.

The Veterans Home Loan Program is one of the homeowner programs that works in this country. The foreclosure rate is much lower than anything in the private sector and I don't think changing this program will do anyone any good.

I cannot agree with balancing the budget on the backs of our veterans.

I cannot support this legislation as it is currently written.

#### **SOUTH KOREA, PANAMA, AND COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS**

#### **HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 12, 2011*

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the South Korea, Panama, and Colombia Free Trade Agreements. It is estimated that, combined, these free trade agreements will create over 250, 000 jobs and will increase U.S. exports by \$13 billion dollars. Given the extraordinary economic challenges we face today, we must seize every opportunity which promises to stimulate our weakened economy and put Americans back to work.

In the Texas' 30th district, merchandise exports support 64, 000 jobs and directly benefit 48 companies. In 2010, my congressional district exported \$876 million worth of goods to South Korea, which directly supported nearly 2,250 jobs. The South Korea Free Trade Agreement will increase market access for the district's goods and services exports and reduce costs for imported raw materials.

The State of Texas depends on world markets; last year alone, Texas' shipments of merchandise totaled \$207 billion. Recently implemented trade agreements, such as the U.S.-Singapore agreement, which increased Texas exports to Singapore by 159 percent, prove that trade works for Texas.

Despite the benefits we stand to reap as a result of passage of these agreements, we must not ignore the associated labor and human rights issues. The Obama Administration, along with Ambassador Kirk, have worked tirelessly to address these valid concerns. Specifically, Colombia has agreed to a Labor Action Plan which requires Colombia to fulfill a series of measures in defined time frames to advance the rights of its workers.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to pass the South Korea, Panama, and Colombia Free Trade Agreements to ensure that America continues to remain at a competitive advantage when it comes to international trade. Our nation's economic growth depends on it.

#### **EXTENDING THE GENERALIZED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES**

SPEECH OF

#### **HON. JOHN D. DINGELL**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 11, 2011*

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2832, a bill whose consideration by the members of this House is long overdue. It is absolutely unconscionable that working Americans displaced by trade have had no Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits since the beginning of this year. I am ashamed that partisan rhetoric has stalled congressional consideration of TAA, once a reliably non-partisan issue. In more human terms, my home state of Michigan has weathered the ill effects of free trade agreements arguably longer than any other state in the union. Thousands of displaced workers in my district have relied on TAA to start their careers over in fields like nursing, alternative energy, an information technology. These workers have experienced first-hand the benefits of TAA and understand—as I do—the value the program brings to communities across the country.

In closing, I call on my colleagues to vote in support of H.R. 2832 and stand up for the American families all over the country to whom free trade has been less than fair. And when we finish voting on this measure, I urge everyone on both sides of Capitol Hill—Republicans and Democrats alike—to take the country's best interests to heart and pass legislation to create jobs.

#### **RECOGNIZING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF LISA CODISPOTI**

#### **HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 12, 2011*

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember Lisa Codispoti, a dynamic and talented champion for better health care who, tragically, lost her battle with her own personal health care challenges last week.

A senior counsel for the National Women's Law Center, Lisa was well-known on Capitol Hill. You could always count on Lisa for an on-target analysis of an arcane policy question or a suggestion for a creative way to overcome any one of the many obstacles we faced in winning health care reform. My staff and I relied on her for so much, and we were far from the only Congressional office that did so.

Lisa was also a hero to health care advocates around the country. As Rachel DeGolia, executive director of the Universal Health Care Action Network said of her, "The movement for health care justice, and for justice of all kinds for women, has lost a wonderful champion and friend."

Lisa's influence was broad and important. They may not have known Lisa personally, but millions of Americans are better off today because of her. Her work is evident throughout the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. As a result of the law she helped to fashion and then enact, being a woman will no longer be a pre-existing condition. People with

existing health problems will no longer face job-lock or the pain of knowing that their condition is raising premiums for their co-workers. Coverage will no longer be denied or lifetime limits imposed. These are very real improvements that will make tangible differences in people's lives.

As her blog post below shows so clearly, this was not a theoretical exercise for Lisa. She lived her entire adult life knowing the significant problems that the private insurance market creates for anyone living with a health care condition—big or small. Her understanding and her experience made her arguments even more compelling and more effective.

We are better off for having known and worked with Lisa Codispoti. Her eloquence and knowledge, combined with her optimistic and gracious spirit, will be deeply missed.

**THE HEALTH CARE LAW: PROVIDES NEW PEACE OF MIND FOR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS—LIKE ME**

(By Lisa Codispoti)

For many health care advocates, the fight for the health care law is more than just a job—it's personal. I was just a sophomore in college when I was diagnosed with a chronic condition that would require lifelong medical treatment. At a time when most college students believe they are invincible, my parents and I were consumed with issues like, would my life-saving medical treatment—which would be necessary for the rest of my life—be covered by insurance, and if so, would they cover my treatment at school five-hours away from my home? And what would happen when I graduated? Would I be able to find a job that had decent health insurance? And what if I decided to go to graduate school? In short, in addition to worrying about my newly diagnosed condition, health insurance was something I had to worry about. A lot. In fact, it has been a recurrent worry throughout the last 28 years since I was diagnosed. What is proper etiquette when receiving a job offer to try to figure out if the insurance they offer is good enough to cover your needed medical treatment? Will you doom a small employer's health insurance premiums with huge cost increases once you are added to their workforce? How to explain to others offering to hire you that, thanks anyway, you couldn't possibly open your own consulting gig because you wouldn't be able to get health insurance on your own?

That's why for me—and millions of Americans living with a chronic health condition—passage of the Affordable Care Act provides such peace of mind. And while I've been very lucky over the last three decades to have jobs with decent insurance, I wonder what kinds of different opportunities I might have pursued had I not been so worried about finding and keeping health insurance coverage. And still, there are opponents of the law who want to repeal it and have stated that the "private market" would somehow magically take care of these problems. Right. Like the private market has done so well for insurance for decades now. Like how the private market has created conditions where women can't find insurance at any price that includes coverage of a basic health care service like maternity. Or allows insurance companies to charge women more than men just because of their gender.

Some opponents of the law have said that there could be high risk pools for people like me who can't get coverage due to a pre-existing condition. To an insurance company executive, that sounds like a dream come true. After all, insurance companies have been rejecting people from coverage due to pre-existing conditions without accountability or